
The Catalyst



The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks
Spring 2005

Volume 7 No. 4

State Parks Volunteers Receive a Raise (and California State Parks is the beneficiary!)

By Margo Cowan
Volunteers in Parks Program Coordinator

Check out this pay increase for volunteers:

Independent Sector has announced that the value of volunteer time has reached \$17.55, up 36 cents from a year earlier. The hourly value, updated yearly, is based on the average hourly earnings of all non-agricultural workers as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). To arrive at its figure, Independent Sector took the BLS number and increased it by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits. For more information visit <http://independentsector.org/>

What does this mean for California State Parks? Over \$15.6 million in contributed value to our Volunteers in Parks (VIP) Program, that's what!



Take a look at the 2003 numbers:

2003 Volunteers in Parks Program

Total Number of VIPs	10,752
Total Hours Contributed by VIPs	923,991 (Equivalent to 443 full time employees)
Value per Hour	\$17.19
TOTAL VALUE TO STATE PARKS	\$15,883,405

2004 Volunteers in Parks Program

Total Number of VIPs	12,851
Total Hours Contributed by VIPs	889,830 (Equivalent to 426 full time employees)
Value per Hour	\$17.55
TOTAL VALUE TO STATE PARKS	\$15,616,516

But there's a paradox. When compared with the 2003 summary, the **number** of volunteers increased by 16%, while volunteer **hours decreased** by nearly 4%.

If you have ideas why the VIP Program appears to be adding volunteers even while losing volunteer hours, Margo Cowan, Volunteers in Parks Program Coordinator, would like to hear from you. Contact Margo at 916.6543.8819 or mcowan@parks.ca.gov.

Any way you look at the numbers, though, California State Parks simply wouldn't be the same without our valued (and valuable) volunteers. Thank a volunteer today. Our parks depend on them. 🐾



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Wanted

***Catalyst* Editor**

**No pay, long hours,
but plenty of room for creativity.**

Applicants should have basic graphic design skills and a broad understanding of the field of interpretation.

Interested?

Contact Donna Pozzi at (916) 653-4643 or DPOZZ@parks.ca.gov

Contributor's Guidelines

The Catalyst welcomes your original articles up to two pages in length. We prefer unpublished material, but will occasionally reprint items published elsewhere. Be sure to include information about the publication so we can get permission to use the material. You may submit an article at any time. Please include a photo whenever possible.

We really appreciate items submitted on disk or by e-mail. We can read most DOS/Windows file formats. Please send photos as separate files, not inserted into your document. You may also submit original photos or other illustrations to *The Catalyst*. All photos and artwork submitted will be returned promptly. We reserve the right to edit all material. Items are selected for publication solely at the discretion of the editor and publisher. We appreciate your suggestions.

From the Editor

Thank you for your patience, this issue has been a long time coming. But there's a lot of good stuff here, so it just might be worth the wait! We've tucked a few favorite resources right on the next page. You will find the Master Interpreter presiding on page 5 as usual, offering gratuitous advice to the interpretively challenged.



On page 6, you will find "The Debut of BIGI or How An Idea Becomes a New Training Course" brought to us by Michael D. Green and Ty Smith. By the way, we wish each of these gentlemen well in their new assignments.

Sara M. Skinner reminds us to watch our language in "Where's It At?" on page 7. Sara is a Guide I at Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park. You can contact her at adobesara@hotmail.com.

Bill Lindemann was recently presented an Award of Excellence for Interpretive Media in the wayside exhibit category. On page 8, he offers us a few thoughts on professional recognition. Bill is the DIS at Sierra District and would love to hear from you at blsierra@jps.net.

Page 10 brings "Mountain Bike Exhibit Is A State Park First," describing the new exhibits at Crystal Cove. It comes to us from Sean Laflin, a designer with L&B Exhibits. You can contact him at slaflin@lbsdexhibits.com.

"Interpretation: The Memory-Creation Profession" appears on page 11. It's written by by Gladys J. Rigsby, Seasonal Naturalist at Prairie State Park, Liberal, Missouri. This article first appeared in the NAI Region VI newsletter and is reprinted here with permission.

Pat Turse from the Accessibility section offers "Tips for Planning an Accessible Exhibit" on page 12. She encourages you to contact her for help with your next exhibit at pturs@parks.ca.gov or 916-445-8953.

"Technological Impacts on the 21st Century Interpreter" appears on page 14. It was written by Sandi Sturm

from Wasilla, Alaska You can reach Sandi at 907-373-7374.

One of my favorite pieces appears on page 16. Titled "An Archeologist Tackles Interpretive Writing," it should resonate with any of you involved in writing exhibit text. This article originally appeared in *The Arrowhead*: the Newsletter of the Employees & Alumni Association of the National Park Service. Barbara Little is an archeologist with the National Center for Cultural Resources, NPS Archeology and Ethnography Program.

Carol Cullens fills us in on the Remarkable Women exhibit- on page 18. You can contact Carol at ccull@parks.ca.gov

On page 20 you will find a piece by Jaime Mendez, part of her ongoing series, "The Road Less Traveled." Jaime is a Guide I at Hearst Castle®; you can email her at tahquish@att.net.

And that's about it for our spring issue — enjoy! This will also be my last issue as your editor. I took on the job in summer 1996 and have really enjoyed bringing you each issue. But my work and home commitments have changed and it is time for someone else to take the lead. It is a great job, even if it doesn't pay, and I am sure it will attract someone talented. Thanks to each of you for your support and for making the time to read *The Catalyst!* 🐾



Brian Cahill, Editor

**"WE ARE DEALING WITH THE
INEFFABLE HERE — WE'RE
OUT THERE SOMEWHERE BE-
TWEEN THE KNOWN AND THE
UNKNOWN, TRYING TO REEL IN
BOTH FOR A CLOSER LOOK."**

— ANNE LAMOTT

What's Up?



Interpreters' Resources

NAI Region 9 Spring Workshop

"Something Old - Something New"

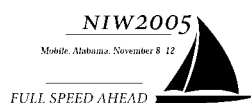
This workshop has something for everyone! With beautiful coastal surroundings, the old Russian fort, and over twelve concurrent sessions to choose from — this is one workshop for everyone. April 29th - May 1st - 2005, Fort Ross State Historic Park. Contact: Robin Joy 707-847-4777 frrobin@mcn.org

Seaweeds Weekend Workshop

A "Seaweeds" weekend workshop in Big Sur, California on June 24 - 26, 2005, will instruct on collecting, mounting, identifying and classifying seaweeds. Led by renowned and enthusiastic phycologist, Dr. Paul Silva. See ucjeps.berkeley.edu/jepwkshp.html.

"Telling the Stories: From History to Myth."

The California Council for the Promotion of History (CCPH) 2005 Annual Conference will be held October 27-29, 2005, in Visalia, CA. Join your colleagues for a weekend of inquiry, exploration, and investigation into the practice and profession of public history. This year's theme is designed to encourage a broad range of topics and to appeal to an array of interests. For more info see www.csus.edu/org/ccph



National Interpreters Workshop

Mobile, Alabama, November 8-12, 2005. See www.interpnet.com.

Video Chameleon

Here's a new way to playback video programs in a visitor center or similar setting. Instead of using a disc player with moving parts that can attract dust, this is a completely solid state unit with no moving parts. The MPEG video files are stored on a Compact Flash card and are easily updated via replacement of the card. For more info see www.videochameleon.com/player.htm

Butterflies Everywhere!

Has this spring's massive butterfly migration made it to your park yet? Millions of butterflies have been seen flying through neighborhoods all over southern California. We are witnessing the migration of painted ladies (*Vanessa cardui*) from their home area in the deserts of southern California and northern Mexico. Painted ladies are also known as the "Cosmopolitan" because they are the world's most widely-distributed butterfly, found on every continent except Australia and Antarctica. You will find lots of great items for interpreting butterflies at [acorn naturalists](http://acornnaturalists.com). See www.acornnaturalists.com

Factoid

Women pray and men go camping according to a recent survey. Men in their 50s say "communing with nature" gives them the biggest religious high while more women report prayer is their most gratifying spiritual activity. Don't know what that means for interpretation, but still interesting.

Puzzles

Could you use a custom puzzle for Junior Rangers? See puzzlemakers.com, where you can design and print customized word searches, crossword puzzles and cryptogram puzzles. You supply the words and clues and the site does the rest.

Graduate Residency In Environmental Education

Live, learn, and teach in the mountains? The McCall Outdoor Science School (MOSS) Graduate Residency in Environmental Education (GREE) is a one-semester training program leading to a UI Graduate Certificate in EE. Gain teaching experience, study ecology in a field setting, earn 15 graduate credits, and develop leadership skills — all while living in a spectacular natural environment. See www.pcei.org/education/mossgrad.htm

Photo Organizer

Find the pictures you forgot you had! Picasa organizes your entire collection while you watch. Move and rename pictures from inside Picasa. Keep one picture in multiple albums without taking up more space on your computer. Make your pictures into slide shows or movies. Even tools for cleaning up and correcting your photos are built-in, plus much, much more. Picasa comes recommended by Carolyn Ward and Alan Wilkinson. And best of all, it's free! See www.picasa.com/

Dear Master Interpreter

Dear Master Interpreter,

I do lots and lots of interpretation, but very few formal scheduled programs. Every visitor contact is an interpretive opportunity, yet there is no way to record these informal contacts. How can we get credit for doing this?



Coastal Kid

Dear Coastal,

There are changes underway in the way interpretive statistics are collected and reported, so you may get the opportunity to report those informal contacts soon. But there are an awful lot of things we all do that are critical to the park mission that we don't get "credit" for. You could say that's just part of our job. No one is looking for credit when a trash can is emptied or campcheck accomplished, we just do it. And that's the way it should be with interpretation, too. Sure, we record and monitor the number of formal scheduled programs, but that's only one measure of a much bigger interpretive effort. Please don't think that only the things that get reported are important!

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

We are working with our co-op to produce some new interpretive panels. We are hoping to reach more people with our message, so we want

them to be bilingual. Do you know where we can get interpretive materials translated into Spanish?

Mono-lingual (in a bilingual world)

Dear Mono,

There may be a flaw in your assumption about reaching more people. Remember the "Fraction of Selection?" Some people see a panel with lots of words and don't read any of them. Research has shown that some bilingual panels are perceived that way. However, **very brief**, well-written panels have been shown to overcome that. (Incidentally, the study was done at the Monterey Bay Aquarium — their panels should be an example for us all).

You can probably find a good translator at a local college, university or community center. To find the best one, send a small sample of your text to several translators. Then have someone you trust who is fluent in Spanish help you decide which is best for your project.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

My DIS keeps telling me my photos do not have high enough resolution for her to use in park projects. My camera has four megs, so what is the problem? Does she just not like my photos?

signed

Not Sharp Enough (apparently)

Dear Fuzzy,

You didn't mention what kind of project. If it is something like a newsletter where the photos would be pretty small, then yeah, she doesn't like your work. But if she is designing an interpretive panel that has a photo 2 or 3 feet across your photos simply do not have enough resolution.

How much resolution you need is determined by the size of the images you'll be creating. If you're only going to make 4-inch snapshots of your images, then you don't need a lot of resolution. But if you're taking pictures that you want to blow up to three feet tall then you want as much resolution as you can get.

The images you shoot probably look great at 5 x 7 inches and pretty darn good at 8 x 10 inches. But they don't have the resolution to go much larger than that.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

I've spent a lot of time this year interpreting butterflies and caterpillars, but you won't believe this! One lady asked me if they are called "painted ladies" because of the yellow paint they leave on your windshield!



The Debut of BIGI or

How an Idea Becomes a New Training Course

By Michael D. Green and Ty Smith

Working with Interpreter III Diane McGrath, Mott Training Center's Steve Wagy, Al Pepito, and the Interpretive Performance Improvement Team (IPIT), the training center ushered in the first Basic Interpretation for Guides and Interpreters (BIGI) course, November 7–12, 2004, held at Marconi Conference Center.

BIGI's debut was a big success, partly because of the many state park interpreters who participated in two state-wide surveys. The first, held in the summer of '02, determined which classifications were doing interpretation and whether or not a thematic approach was being applied. Survey results confirmed the need to create standardized interpretive training for guides and interpreters, similar to training provided to ranger and lifeguard cadets in the academy.

In a second survey interpreters statewide ranked 33 potential topics for training and suggested several new ones. Since it is a primary goal to design a class that best fills participants' needs, survey results were incorporated into the final syllabus.

The primary teaching resource for the new class was the Basic Interpretation Learning System (BILS). Jonathan Williams unveiled this newly-created training tool at the District Interpretive Coordinators Workshop,



February 23, 2004 (*Catalyst: Winter 2004*). As hoped, BILS proved to be an effective, well-organized resource for preparing and teaching course training units.

Eighteen participants came from around the state—Capital District, Northern Buttes, San Luis Obispo Coast, and DPR Headquarters were represented. Even though it was designed to be a basic class in interpretation, many participants had broad experience and were generous with constructive comments during training, providing valuable feedback for future BIGI classes.

Instructors provided several highlights during the week—a rainy-day, impromptu tour of the old

Marconi Hotel by the Conference Center staff, a field trip to Petaluma Adobe SHP featuring Guide I Sara Skinner, and an evening of living history with Jacqueline Ball and Katrina Hoover. Interpreter Cara O'Brian revealed the art of evaluation in "Aiming for Excellence." Michael Green discussed "Theme" and demonstrated universal communication concepts in "Storytelling." George Carter and partner Ty Smith did an expert job leading a unit on "Relating History to Current Events." Joe von Herrmann from Interpretation and Education Division gave us a detailed look at our Partnership with Public Education and Miriam Meidam brought some fascinating interpretive technology and led a spirited pro-and-cons discussion on "Using Technology in Interpretation." R.I.S. Victoria Kastner's slide show talk on "Interpreting Museum Collections" was extremely well-received. Finishing up the week, John Mott and Margo Cowan led the group in a discussion of "Volunteers in Parks" and Pat Turse brought us up to date on "Interpretation and ADA."

The good news is, IPIT is recommending that BIGI be a required course for all guides and interpreters to be completed within their first two years in Parks. Thanks to the efforts of so many, the opportunity for standardized, high quality interpretive training for guides and interpreters through Mott Training Center is a long-overdue reality. 🐾

Where's It At?

By Sara M. Skinner

Guide I

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park

My shoulders and neck cringe when I hear the phrase "Where's it at?" or "That's where it's at" or "Where did you put it at?" I have heard many varieties. All demonstrate the same redundancy. When using the "where-clause," there is no reason to use the "at" at the end of the sentence. The spell-check on computers will tell you that. I grew up in a home with a father who was a high school English teacher. I remember



The idea of credibility is one that is almost as important as the use of "theme" in interpretation. When I listen to professional people speak, I cringe at the misuse of our language. For me, impressions are crippled when interpreters abuse the language.

fondly, of course, my "grammar study" summers, requiring an hour or so of study before I could go with my friends.

I just recently returned from N.A.I.'s annual National Interpreter's Workshop, held this year in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The workshop, as usual, was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with old friends and network with new ones.

When I attend these workshops, I like to step away from the chaos for a few hours and experience the sites and museums within the host city. I


often evaluate the interpretation at these sites in terms of signs, brochures, and services. The displays and atmosphere within the Public Museum of Grand Rapids and the Outdoor Discovery Center in Holland were very impressive. However, at various places and demonstrations that I attended, I witnessed some egregious misuses of the English language.

The idea of credibility is one that is almost as important as the use of "theme" in interpretation. I study the interpreter's background experiences,

education, and sources of information. When I listen to professional people speak, I cringe at the misuse of our language. For me, impressions are crippled when interpreters abuse the language.

Often, during my trip to Grand Rapids, I heard interpreters and other professional people at booths, using "where at." This error is becoming widespread among television shows, radio stations, and daily conversations. I notice that people over forty tend not to use the donkey braying "aaaaat" with "where clauses" nor do they salt their sentences with "like" as in "I, like, thought that he would like...."

I would like to challenge everyone in our field of interpretation to review common usage errors and practice avoiding them. Of course, nobody is perfect. I'm sure someone can find examples of usage errors in my article. But try and see if you can correct those who make such errors, so that we, as interpreters of so much valuable information do not lose the chance to impress the older generations that learned good common English usage.

The misuse of language calls into question the quality of education in the minds of the listeners. As interpreters, this is something we don't need or want. Of what use are hours of research, if we lose the audience in our attempts to communicate the information we gather? 

Reminiscing on a Few Measures of Success...

By Bill Lindemann
DIS Sierra District

When something is properly planned and organized it is imbued with the intentions and credibility of its creators. Those originators are often said to live through their creations, sometimes long after they are gone. Great masterworks of art and science are both timely and timeless.

Institutions that follow the precepts of their founders may express the wisdom of their purpose. Peer members within such organizations support the founders' beliefs and trust in one another's cooperativeness, creativity, credibility, direction, inspiration and leadership. So, professionally, we can look to those kinds of organizational affiliation to strengthen and deepen meaningfulness and significance within our careers and our lives.

Recognition developed from the membership of peers within a well organized and thoughtfully evolved group is cumulatively the expression of its membership, all the way back to the founders. Though differences of opinion may (and should) exist within the body, it is agreed by the members to function, to sanction as a whole. From a group like that, acclaim is ennobling, the honor humbling. There is no more meaningful recognition in your career than that of your peers.

Cumulative personal and professional experiences bring me to reflect



Bill Lindemann accepts a competitive award of excellence for Interpretive Media in the wayside exhibit category. Lindemann is a life member of the National Association for Interpretation and one of the organization's previous Media Award and Meritorious Service Award recipients.

often on the values I embrace within such an organization: the National Association for Interpretation, NAI, a well organized and evolved professional support and development group. NAI's expressed purpose is to inspire leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession.

One of many uplifting and defining life experiences occurred to me recently. At the annual NAI Interpreters Workshop this November, I was called to accept a competitive award of excellence for Interpretive Media in the wayside exhibit category for exhibits completed at Sugar Pine Point State Park. Although the award was not on the event horizon when we began, I would like to share with you why, I believe, our team was successful in this measure.

When a plan is properly carried out, the results are imbued with the organized intentions of its creators. Our plan was for objective-driven, site specific, organized, thematic, entertaining, relevant interpretation. The list of project objectives included management needs, budgetary restrictions, interpretive principles, natural, cultural and recreational resource values, and enrichment opportunities for families, tourists and visiting school groups. The fundamental goal of the team was to strive for excellence.

As planners we intended to connect visitors outside the summer interpretive program season with resources through programmatically accessible, exciting and evocative interpretive graphics. To meet this

need we employed representational visual artists to render historic images in color, in a sense to bring them alive. Additional historic black and white photographic images needed to support painterly interpretations to create a sense of authenticity overall, an anchoring device. The graphic designer needed to work with warm subdued natural colors to unite the exhibit backgrounds with one another and with their natural surroundings. The concept of frames around the graphics would be eliminated to perpetuate the sense of unity and continuity.

Writing had to weave provocative questions and thematic statements around graphic elements to captivate imagination and challenge understanding. Controversy had to be welcomed and thoughtfully illuminated. Ultimately, visitors would feel connected through each succeeding generation's redefinition of the grand, contagious adventure waiting at the site. Visitors' families would feel connected by participating in the secret lives of other species through directed interactions at the site. Every effort had to be made to find and tell the hidden story within each story.

My job as project manager was to evaluate the needs of the site, the visitors, the staff and the project and then to deliver the project accordingly. To that end I conducted the research related to the topics and devised themes, researched appropriate media and wrote the project scope, plan and CEQA evaluation. Once the project deliverables were determined I contacted suppliers, collaborators and contractors and

wrote agreements and contracts for artistic and written content development, graphics design and fabrication. I edited script, art directed graphics, and assured adherence to our objectives. Site excavations for installation were coordinated with an archaeologist and the installations completed with seasonal help.

I firmly believe that by remaining true to our planning process, our objectives and our visitors, we as a team achieved the level of excellence

we strived for. The real reward for the work on this project is the validation of our intentions. That happens noticeably on a daily basis through our visitors' enjoyment and appreciation.

Receiving the award motivates me to work harder to achieve the excellence my professional organization, its founders and my peers demand of me. 🐾

Sugar Pine Point Wayside Exhibit Objectives

- provide directional and informational opportunities with "you are here" orientation on maps
- provide interpretive natural, cultural and recreational point-of-view experiences
- visitors given a sense of the park during other seasons of the year historically and now
- exhibits comprised of mounted, thematically linked, natural, cultural, recreational and informational interpretive panels integrating active voice text and highest quality full color graphics
- colorful, accurate painted renderings commissioned from noteworthy artists
- visitors treated to natural and cultural history and recreational interpretation not otherwise included in programs offered at the park, esp. natural history in winter
- available during off season when programs are unavailable
- many historic and contemporary photographs used as illustrations
- vehicle to make historic photo album images accessible to visitors
- colorful, accurate painted renderings of cultural subjects used w/ b+w photos to bring vibrancy to the past
- colorful, accurate painted renderings depict panoramas of creek and lake w/ species portrayed interactively
- interpretive, proprietary take-along products, some geared for children, developed to extend meaningfulness and interactivity of exhibits
- high pressure laminate panels with embedded graphics delivered to site with ten-year warranties
- panels top mounted on posts angled to be visible seated or standing

Mountain Bike Exhibit Is a State Park First

By Sean Laflin
L&B Exhibits

The El Moro Visitor Center at Crystal Cove State Park is celebrating its reopening to the public with a dirty old bicycle with chipped paint and fat tires! Huh?

The bike was acquired from Joe Breeze, recognized by the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame as the originator of the sport. He presented it to the park for permanent display.

The mountain bike is a 1934 Schwinn Excelsior one-speed bicycle with a Morrow drum brake. Joe never washed it after it's last run down Repack Road, the site of the earliest downhill races. Joe won more Repack races than anybody.

"It's a first". Karen Beery, Interpretive Planner for California State Parks (CSP), informed the project team that this is the first exhibit to interpret the history of mountain biking in CSP.

After researching the natural and cultural history of the Crystal Cove backcountry, Sean Laflin, the project's designer, discovered numerous connections between the park's history and biking.

"Crystal Cove is one of the most popular southern California parks for mountain biking." Sean pushed to include the story and found Joe Breeze in the process. The rest is history.



It's been almost 15 years that Supervising Park Ranger, Mike Easton has waited for a real visitor center for the backcountry to interpret the natural, cultural and recreational resources for his park visitors.

In fact, it's been almost 15 years that Supervising Park Ranger Mike Easton has waited for a real visitor center for the backcountry to interpret the natural, cultural and recreational resources for his park visitors.

The new exhibits celebrate the park's natural and cultural features and outdoor recreation with a way-finding theme, interactive exhibits and a kid's learning area. A 30' long trail photograph on the floor to replicate a trail is planned, should fund raising activities be successful.

Mike has only one comment now: "The new displays are great and I can finally retire!"

This wasn't a first for Lewellen & Best Exhibits, who specialize in developing interpretive experiences. They are currently developing five other visitor centers for CSP. They designed Seeley Stables almost 30 years ago and recently completed the 4,087 square foot McCoy House Visitor Center, both in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. 🐾

Interpretation

The Memory-Creation Profession

**By Gladys J. Rigsby,
Seasonal Naturalist
Prairie State Park, Liberal, Missouri**

Resource interpretation can do a lot of things — entertain, inspire, teach, and help to create lasting, treasured memories.

As an interpreter with Missouri State Parks, I have had the pleasure of meeting a great number of park visitors, some of whom have shared with me a few of their inspirational memories. These recollections have ranged from childhood experiences of yearly family outings to a particular campsite, to remembrances of Civilian Conservation Corps days of the 1930s. A return to the park for these visitors is a way to relive a special memory and to retrace that special "trail" carefully mapped in their minds. These visitors are in a memory-recall mode, which may be enhanced by the interpretation that we provide.

There is a second category of park attendees: first-time visitors. They are in search of making a memory, to capture a family snapshot, or to map a "trail" forever in their minds. Some enjoy the chance of seeing certain wildlife for the first time so close to their campsite, while others delight in discovering how the park was created. All desire to go home with a story to tell and a memory to relive.



For both types of visitors, the site interpreter plays a pivotal role. As resource interpreters we can provide the "setting" in which visitors' stories may unfold. An interpreter may, while answering a trail question, relate information regarding a rock shelter utilized by Native Americans, or tell the story of an intermittent stream. Perhaps the interpreter can point to a place of solitude to help clear a weary mind, or a place to just sit for a while and fill a page in a nature journal. I often share my "secret" nature-journaling spots with visitors so that they may enjoy sights and sounds they probably won't otherwise encounter. Children's questions concerning what type of "bug" has been discovered may be answered with a brief story of that insect's "breakfast routine" or current "wardrobe". The objective here is to give each visitor something they can relate to and remember about the site you

are interpreting so they may take home a memory.

Perhaps your visitor happens to be one with "frequent park miles." You may wish to ask what their interests are and then try to point out some "new" discoveries for them to explore at your site. If, while on roving duty in the campground, someone wishes to discuss days of yesteryear in the park, take time to hear their stories and recollections. In other words, allow them the opportunity to relive that memory, for you will discover that listening benefits both the visitor and the interpreter. Try to continually improve upon past programs by incorporating relevant cultural aspects into nature presentations; likewise, include nature in "living history" programs to capture more of your audience and their interests.

If you are the person at the front desk, it is not just merely a visitor center or a contact station; it is a memory-creation facility. When preparing for an evening program, it is not just time to set up the audiovisual equipment; it is time to set the stage for a memory-making experience.

It is our responsibility as interpreters to provide enriching experiences for all visitors, whether they be first time or return guests. After all, interpretation is a memory-reliving experience and a memory-creation profession. 🐾

Tips for Planning an Accessible Exhibit

By Pat Turse, Accessibility Section,
Interpretive Review

The Accessibility Section provides a free review for all proposed interpretive panels, cases and other exhibits by working with you and your contractors. I look at the text and graphics, which are the focus of this article, and our architects and maintenance chief review the larger architectural elements. This review is not a long process; we often do the reviews in a couple of days and consider two weeks a maximum turn-around time.

We are about to release new State Park Accessibility Guidelines to replace and improve our 2001 Access to Parks Guidelines with changed and expanded exhibit guidelines. Meanwhile, if there is an interpretive panel or a case exhibit in your future, here are some pointers to help ensure that the information is accessible.

1. What do the Disabled Users Want?

For larger projects especially, try to involve your potential audiences to learn what will help your project be accessible. If your district or sector has a Disabled Advisory Resource Group, why not bring them in to comment on your proposed design? Try to get a range of easy and more long-range suggestions. You need to be clear to your DARG that the ultimate choices made must meet code AND park needs. If you don't have a DARG, you and your accessi-



bility coordinator might consider recruiting a project-specific panel composed of persons with various disabilities who are interested in parks and museums. They have a perspective we have too often missed.

2. Learning Theory

Those interpretive truisms about doing, touching, hearing or any combined modes of learning elevates all visitors' exhibit experience. Go for it! Controls, earphones, and touch items must be within reach ranges and require no grasping or twisting. Even small exhibits need some multi-sensory components.

3. Location

The path of travel should be barrier-free, level and firm with adequate space for wheelchair users to approach, read, and turn back to the main path. Generally this is a 60"

circle, which may include some of the main path or aisle. Exhibit panels along a busy multi-use trail that includes bikes would need to be off the main trail, while those in a museum may include some of the main aisle width.

4. Mounting Details

Appropriate angles and heights of mounting help ensure that seated (or short) and standing users can comfortably read the text. We generally recommend that angled panels are mounted with the bottom edge between 28" and 34" above the surface. For small panels (or for labels for exhibit items on flat shelves) a 30-60 degree angle is usually easier to read than horizontal panels or labels placed flat on shelves. For vertically mounted exhibits, if panels are mounted so that most of your narrative text falls between the optimum viewing height medians of

46" and 62" for seated and standing adult users, it will be in most viewers' comfort range.

5. Font Sizes and Styles; Word Count

Font choices should be very legible and at appropriate sizes. All narrative text (main body text, interpretive sidebars) should meet or exceed 3/8-inch height minimums (measuring an uppercase X) for viewing distances up to 3 feet. For many fonts, this will mean sizes that range from 40 to 48 points. Text writers need to know this very early to avoid writing too much. Northern Service Center design staff aim for 80 to 120 word limits (counting every word except titles) per each 32x40" panel. Text should never exceed 150 words. Captions may be smaller but should be legible, as they convey interpretive text. Credits can be very small. Sans serif or simple, clean serifs may be acceptable. Italics are harder to read than normal upright fonts and should be avoided, except for Latin names, book titles or short quotes.

6. Lighting

Ideal lighting of an exhibit should be at 10 foot-candles (100 lux) for optimum visibility for those with low vision. Alternatives are possible for conservation requirements. Lighting should be even (without glare). It should be coordinated throughout visitor centers to achieve levels between 10 and 30 foot-candles for the exhibit. Exterior panels should be designed and located to minimize problems from the sun or deep shadow. All finishes should be non-glare or matte.



7. Color and Contrasts

Persons with low vision do not see contrasts very well, and we need to plan accordingly, using hues and saturations that provide the needed level of contrast. The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) suggest a 70% difference in light reflectivity between text and background colors. Your contractors need to select colors and intensities that meet these guidelines.

8. Alternate Formats

Alternate formats of exhibit information must be available, and this information and a contact are to be provided somewhere on the introductory panel of the exhibit (such as,

"Alternate Formats available; contact #") or posted nearby. The availability statement should be easy to read. A diskette with PDF files, HTML files and either Word or TXT files should be available and one or more of the formats should be provided on request. An audio description or data CD of the exhibit, including short vivid descriptions of graphics or objects, may also be offered. If Braille is requested, handouts should be provided. Contact the Accessibility Section to help you locate a reasonably priced Braille provider. 🐾

Please contact Pat Turse,
pturs@parks.ca.gov or 916-445-8953, with comments or questions.

Technological Impacts on the 21st Century Interpreter

By Sandi Sturm
Wasilla, Alaska

When Freeman Tilden formally defined interpretation in 1957 as "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information," he had no way of knowing the impact technology would have on the interpreter of the 21st century.

Our audiences today are no longer limited to smiling, inquisitive faces standing within the sound of our voices. How do we capture the attention of our audiences and communicate our message when those faces are spread across many miles, time zones, or continents? We do it by adding e-Learning tools to our interpreter toolbox.

use minimal amounts of technology but still deliver the message you intend them to receive.

Reveal Meanings and Relationships Through the Use of Original Objects

With an audience sitting in front of you, the use of original objects might mean holding and touching various specimens. So how do you achieve this experience with those at a distance? Do you send each one a kit of specimens? Perhaps - if your budget allows. But there are other ways to achieve this goal.

Educators around the state of Alaska participate in an 8-week Fire! in Alaska workshop without leaving their village, home, or classroom. Thanks to the generous support of Alaska Department of Forestry and other agencies, each school or

Another option, for those with limited budgets, is to have participants gather their own specimens. Educators in a distance-delivered Alaska Wildlife Curriculum 8-week workshop are asked to go outside their rooms and make observations of animal signs and tree species. They later share their observations with the rest of the group.

e-Learning can also be combined with site visits where participants are able to examine objects that they learned about before going to the site. In this scenario, the audience is well prepared with questions which make for a more interactive session. If the class is too dispersed, a location near them could be used, such as a museum or outdoor center. What a great way to partner with fellow interpreters and introduce your audience to local resources!

How do we capture the attention of our audiences and communicate our message when those faces are spread across many miles, time zones, or continents?

Let's take a look at Tilden's definition and how it translates into the tools of the 21st century using samples of programs offered to rural Alaska educators. Vast distances and technology challenges make this audience a good example of how to

agency that participates receives a special Fire Kit, which is a smaller version of a Fire Trunk that is available in more populated regions. Inside the Kit are materials needed to complete experiments along with additional resources.

First Hand Experience

This is probably the number one "perceived" hurdle to using e-Learning. Interpreters are not alone in asking the question, "How can you provide hands-on experience using e-Learning?" The real question is, "How can you do it without having me there?"

Educators in the Fire! in Alaska workshop conduct fire experiments using materials in their Fire Kits and share hypotheses and results with others in the class. Some conduct experiments with students, others



work with fellow co-workers. It is hands-on, but the facilitator is many miles away.

First hand experience may also involve teachers and their students, instead of the interpreter and the teachers. Participants are able to experience the interpreter's message while sitting in their own environments and seeing how it directly relates to them, their local ecosystems or cultural heritage. And in the end, they share this experience with others in the e-Learning environment.

Illustrated Media

Of all the components of Tilden's definition, this is most easily transferred to the 21st century, yet the tools used today may have seemed a bit unreal in 1957. Imagine trying to explain the internet and desktop computer to someone who typed letters on a manual typewriter or drew images and pasted them to cardboard for display. Imagine telling them that in their future they would be able to type text and insert color

images, taken two-minutes earlier, into a PowerPoint presentation and show it to people around the world in as little as 10 minutes! Now, imagine how you can use these new tools to share something that happened just this morning, such as the unearthing of an important artifact or birth of a rare species of bird.

Technology has greatly improved the way we reach across to distant audiences. Combined with the internet, the possibilities are endless. Simulations can show historical perspectives; video can be streamed to home computers followed by threaded discussions among people on different continents, and 24-hour images of sea life in remote islands can be viewed and studied from any internet-connected computer.

If you still have memories of early online learning experiences, it is time to wipe that memory clean. Just a few years ago, online learning often only

communicated factual information by posting a textbook or lecture online and adding a multiple choice test at the end. Those initial attempts were taken from the world of correspondence. Today, educators interact, share experiences, create a body of knowledge, and discuss important issues using simple technologies. You do not need large budgets to achieve success.

Educators in the Alaska Wildlife Curriculum workshop use the curriculum with their audiences, then present those experiences to the rest of the class during a teleconference. Some use PowerPoint for visuals, some lead visualizations, and all share their experiences.

It appears that Tilden's definition is still relevant in the 21st century – just the tools have changed. 🐾

An Archeologist Tackles Interpretive Writing

By Barbara Little
NPS Archaeologist

I took on the challenge of interpretive writing when I was asked to produce a visitors' walking guide to archeology in Washington, D.C. I've written dozens of articles and book chapters for various audiences, but these were informational pieces rather than interpretive. The skills required to write in a different style can be learned, but this requires both genuine effort and flexibility to learn. We often learn our writing styles without being conscious of our influences. We learn to write academically in an academic setting and bureaucratically in an agency setting. To learn interpretive writing, I found that I had to free myself of those confines and accept only the boundaries of my own passionate interest in the archeological stories.



connect intellectually and/or emotionally with the resource.

To write "Washington Underground: Archeology in Downtown Washington D.C., a walking and metro guide to the past" I had to read a lot of site reports. It was a struggle to find the hooks that would lead me to good stories.

I set several goals for this walking guide. I wanted to inform readers that

To show the "before" and "after" of my interpretive writing techniques, here are my examples of descriptions of the same site. You can find the whole guide at www.heritage.umd.edu/DCArcheologyTour.htm.

I wrote this informational version first: "The Petersen House —In 1849 a German immigrant family purchased some land and erected a house on this property at 516 10th Street, NW. William and Anna Petersen had six children and took in boarders as well. The archaeological remains of domestic life contain such objects as a bone domino piece and clay marbles. Straight pins and buttons of bone, shell, metal and glass may be associated with William Petersen's trade as a tailor. Some other materials may be related to boarders at the house. Henry and Julius Ulke were brothers who boarded with the Petersens in the 1860s. Their trade was photography, but they were also amateur entomologists. A microscope slide amid the remains may have been associated with their study of insects. In April 1865, President Abraham

People will grapple with difficult concepts if they care, but difficult or opaque language forms a barrier to those concepts and stifles the desire to care.

The National Park Service Interpretive Development Program's Module 230 (www.nps.gov/idp/interp/230/module.htm) is one resource that can lead you through the necessary skills. It is important to get a lot of honest feedback from others who understand the interpretive process, including tangibles, intangibles, universals and the need to provide audience opportunities to

there is indeed archeology in the downtown of this major urban area; I wanted the reader to see that archeology can contribute to major historical and contemporary issues —like public health, immigration and racism; and I wanted the reader to come up with the opinion that it is worth pursuing archeology in the city and that preservation laws that support it are worthwhile.

Lincoln was carried to this house after being shot at Ford's Theatre, which is directly across the street. He died in the bedroom of the upstairs portion of the addition."

home after being shot at Ford's Theatre, life changed forever for your family. You wrote in your diary about the immense sadness and grief felt by the family and the way that people

In my opinion, intellectual connections are underrated by many interpretive professionals, while emotional connections are underrated by resource specialists.

Here is the interpretive revision: "In the Path of History — If you were Louisa Petersen, perhaps you would remember moving to this neighborhood with your parents to the house they built here in 1849. Perhaps you heard stories of the old country and dreams about the future and realized that you were joining other families who had come from Germany to make a new life in the United States.

"If you looked through the remains that archaeologists have recovered lifetimes later, you'd finger the straight pins and buttons of bone, shell, metal and glass and be reminded of your father William's trade as a tailor. How much would you remember about the brothers Henry and Julius Ulke, among all the boarders who lived with your family? They were photographers but they were also amateur entomologists. Would you associate the microscope slide in the archaeological collection with their study of insects?

"Whatever else you might remember of life at 516 10th Street, you would never forget April 14, 1865. The night that President Abraham Lincoln was carried to your

tore up carpets and other items from your home as grim souvenirs of the House Where Lincoln Died."

For each of the sites on the map, I needed to identify elements for interpretation. The tangibles were different for each and included features such as cisterns and wells, and artifacts such as the sewing implements. The intangibles included struggle, suffering and unexpected change of the sort that confronted the Petersens. The idea of change is a universal and is one with which archeologists often work. Although some of us may have a difficult time with the concept of "universals," there is enough common ground to make this idea useful.

Interpretive products provide opportunities for the audience to form intellectual and emotional connections. In my opinion, intellectual connections are underrated by many interpretive professionals, while emotional connections are underrated by resource specialists. Emotional connections are essential, but sometimes subdued. Archeologists shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that strict objectivity should

surround all aspects of resource interpretation. In the above example, I focused on the opportunity for an emotional, empathetic connection more than an intellectual one. After learning the basics and practicing, I can offer the following points about interpretive writing:

- It is different from writing for scholarly peers.
- It is not a substitute for scholarly reports or other academic writing, but it can enliven that sort of writing.
- It can be learned.
- Take the idea of the "universal" with a grain of salt, but don't underestimate its power as a hook.
- It comes with no guarantees that your audience will form the connections you expect.
- Ask for criticism and take it both seriously and lightly.
- Don't neglect the richness of detail of place and time in pursuit of the universal.
- Intellectual connections are valid, but may not be sufficient for many audiences.
- Emotional connections are valid and may be necessary for most audiences.
- People will grapple with difficult concepts if they care, but difficult or opaque language forms a barrier to those concepts and stifles the desire to care. 🐾

For more information on interpreting archeology, explore "Effective Interpretation of Archeological Resources: The Archeology-Interpreter Shared Competency Course of Study" at www.nps.gov/idp/interp/440/module.htm and supporting resources at www.cr.nps.gov/aad/AFORI/index.htm

California's Remarkable Women Exhibit

By Carol Cullens
Interpretive Publications

Soon after arriving in Sacramento, First Lady Maria Shriver noted that the achievements of California's women were not being recognized. The capital of the world's fifth largest economy—one that has been significantly shaped by the enterprise, ability and insight of women—had not set aside a place to celebrate the accomplishments of at least half the population.

Seeing the need for good female role models, Maria Shriver set out to inspire young women for "generations to come" to be anything they wanted to be. She proposed an exhibit celebrating the deeds of California's remarkable women at the State History Museum—formerly the Golden State Museum. Then she tapped into the legendary dedication, hardheaded devotion to duty, high standards and know-how of California State Parks. In DPR Director Ruth Coleman's words, "This is the best example of state agencies working together to accomplish this truly fine public tribute to the role and contributions that have been made by women in California."



DPR Director Ruth Coleman and First Lady Maria Shriver answer questions from the media

DPR staff, working with State Archives and State Capitol Museum staff, created a memorable exhibit. Work began in mid-January 2004, and the exhibit opened on May 13, honoring the talent, initiative, intelligence and determination of more than 200 women. According to museum director Ross McGuire, attendance at the museum—usually averaging about 70,000 visitors annually—is up 25 percent since May 2003. Located at

1020 O Street, the museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday from noon to 5 p.m., and is closed on Monday and major holidays.

So far, reviewers agree that this is not your run-of-the-mill exhibit. Critics refer to it as "lively," with such descriptions as, "...the life-size replica of snowboarder Tara Dakides swooping through the air right beside the 7-foot tower of Barbie dolls." (Anita Creamer of the *Sacramento Bee*). They describe it as large (true), colorful (it is that), respectful (well, after all—these people are our heroes), extremely well executed (what else?), and something we can all be proud of (and that includes you). Come and see it, and before you leave, stop at the interactive computers and take the opportunity to nominate your own remarkable women. 🐾



Who ARE These People?

What did it take to make the list of California's Remarkable Women? DPR staff submitted names of women we have long admired—Jane Stanford, Nancy Gooch, Maria Soberanes Bale. From other sources nominees ranged from Native American basketweaver Marie Potts and tree-sitter Julia "Butterfly" Hill to Marguerite Vogt, the 91-year-old molecular biologist who is still hard at work in the Salk Institute laboratory. Each committee meeting brought new names. Finally, we created two segments—about 200 "Notables" and 16 "Legends."

The "Notables" are prominent people who consistently set an inspirational example. They include such role models as "Rosie the Riveter," the collective name for 6 million American women who left home during World War II to work in factories; retired Justice Alice A. Lytle, a champion of women's and children's causes; women suffragists, most of whom did not live to exercise the right to vote; Amy Tan, who writes about the generational and cultural gaps between immigrant mothers and their American-born daughters; and Peace Corps Volun-



The exhibit begins with displays honoring Elizabeth Taylor, Minerva, the State Symbol, aviator Amelia Earhart, and Jane Stanford.

teers, 59 percent of whom have been women.

A "Legend" had to have challenged the status quo and changed the way we perceive the world. Interestingly, many were aware of their capabilities from early childhood, and their parents imposed no limits on what they could accomplish.

They have flown through space (Sally Ride), saved thousands of acres of redwoods from the axe (Josephine McCrackin), and restored and protected precious eyesight (Dr. Patricia

Bath). They have overcome ethnic (Dr. March Fong Eu) and gender (Julia Morgan) barriers, inspired confidence in millions of insecure cooks (Julia Child), and given away billions to save the world in general (Joan Kroc, McDonalds) and California in particular (Joan Irvine Smith). They support such causes as AIDS research (Elizabeth Taylor) and child nutrition (Alice Waters, *Chez Panisse*). They have shown that large corporations can be environmentally responsible (Carly Fiorina, Hewlett-Packard), that impeccable customer service is vital to business success (Meg Whitman, eBay), and that women can come in first in a male-dominated field (Amelia Earhart). Champions of just causes include Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers; Jane Stanford, who insisted that Stanford University accept women; and Minerva, the armor-clad Roman goddess on the Great Seal of the State of California—a fitting symbol for California and the diversity of roles women have played in its past, present and future. 🐾



The Sports Wall recognizes the accomplishments of women in sports.

The Road Less Traveled

Slamm'n Doors

by J. Mendez

Have you heard the sound of a slamm'n door? Maybe it was when you discovered that fifty wasn't all that nifty. Perhaps your birthday present was a pink slip wrapped in reorganization paper and tied with a down-sized bow, or the realization that the pension and social security you had contributed to your entire adult life may not be there when you retire.

Have you heard the sound of a slamm'n door? Maybe it was when you discovered that your career ladder was missing a top rung, or perhaps it was when you realized your career path was nothing more than a dead end road.

Have you heard the sound of a slamm'n door? Maybe it was when a generous donor agreed to provide the funding to purchase a valuable piece of habitat for a new park but your agency had to turn down the offer because there were no funds to manage it, or perhaps it was when you realized that your agency didn't even have enough money to manage what it already had.

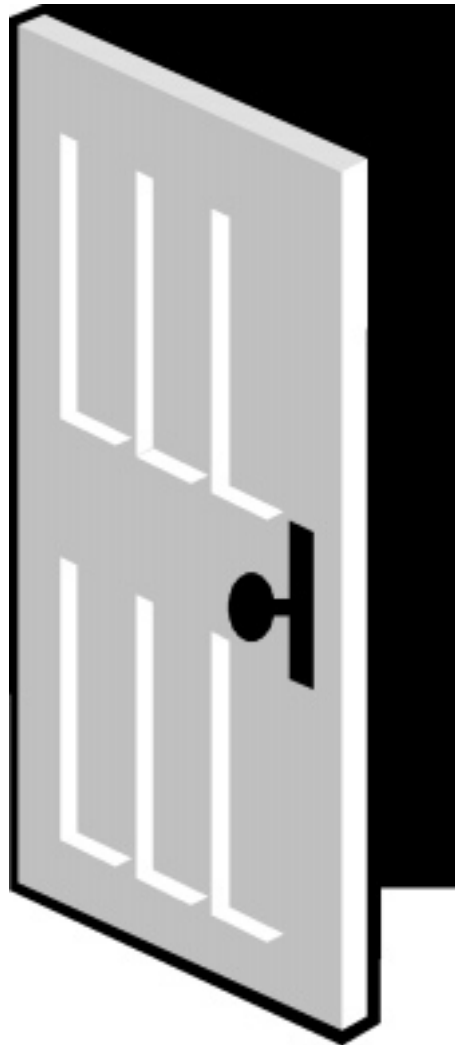
Lately, the sounds of slamm'n doors are about the only sounds that those of us involved in the preservation of our cultural and natural heritage have heard. The doors leading to land acquisitions, funding, habitat restoration, park protection, maintenance, interpretation and education are not only being closed

one by one but – ever increasingly – slammed shut and then bolted. Are our local, state, and national treasures headed for the endangered species list? Will parks, as we know them, become extinct?

When one door closes ... No matter whether it's a pink slip replaced by a paycheck, complacency replaced with political action, careers and career paths revitalized and redrawn, or "graying" agencies and their employees who have reached deep inside and realize that they not

only still have a lot to contribute but also the determination and skills to make it so ...another door will be opened. The agencies, their employees, volunteers, and benefactors will adapt and evolve into stronger and more effective units capable of meeting the challenges before them. They will do more than just survive – they will thrive!

Have you heard the sound of a slamm'n door? Some say it sounds a lot like opportunity knocking! 🐾



California's Tapestry

A Section of *The Catalyst*

Office of Community Involvement

Issue #20 - Spring 05



**Tapestry is on Spring Break
Watch for it in your next issue**

Submit articles and comments to: Michelle Edwards in the Human Rights
Office MEDWA@parks.ca.gov (916) 653-8148 or Fax (916)653-5645

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